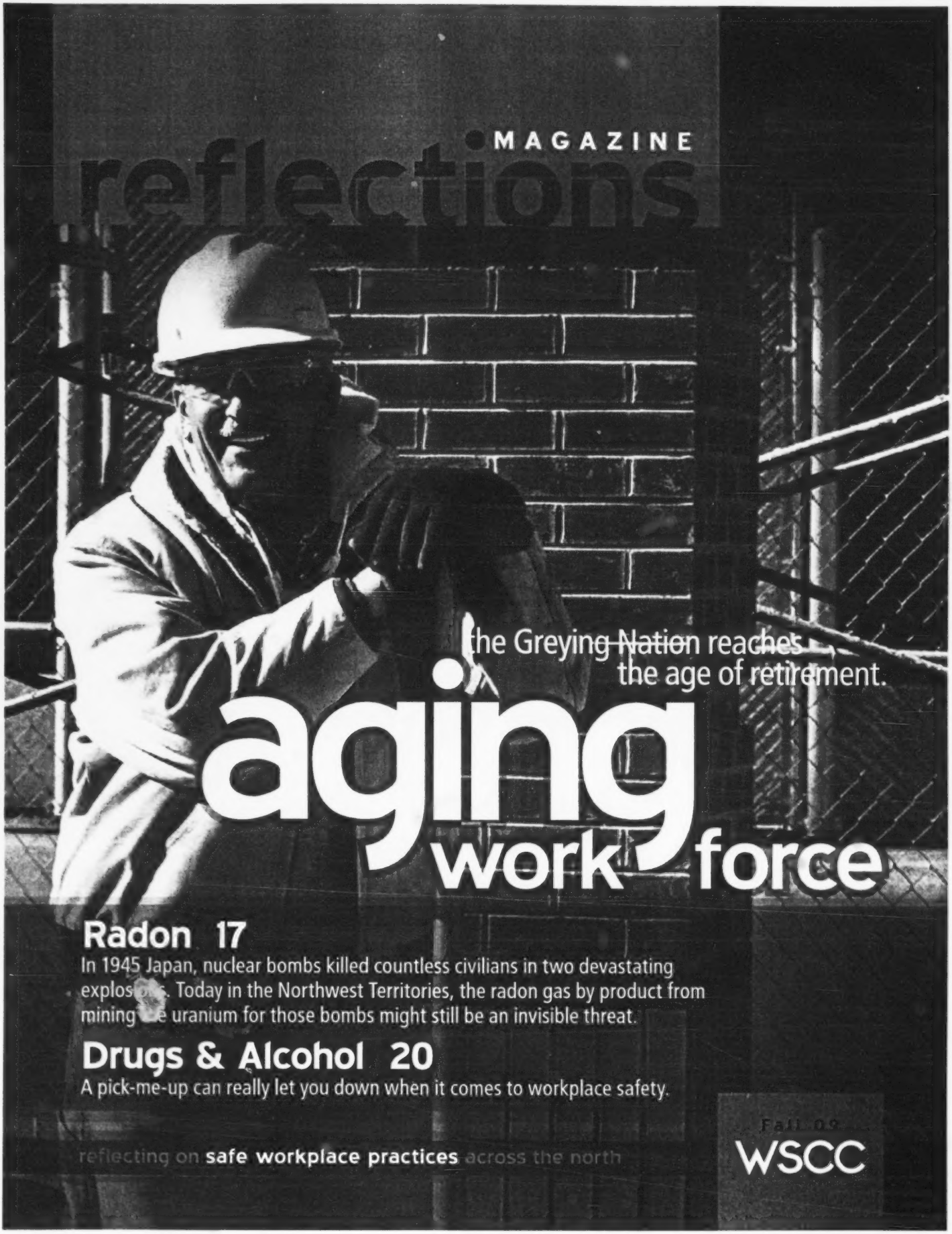

MAGAZINE
reflections
the Greying Nation reaches the age of retirement.
aging work force
Radon 17
In 1945 Japan, nuclear bombs killed countless civilians in two devastating explos . Today in the Northwest Territories, the radon gas by product from mining e uranium for those bombs might still be an invisible threat.
Drugs & Alcohol 20
A pick-me-up can really let you down when it comes to workplace safety.
reflecting on safe workplace practices across the north
Fall 09
WSCC

# Don't leave workers in the cold.

## Request your Return-to-Work Toolkit today!

The WSCC has a **FREE** Return-to-Work (RTW) Toolkit with everything you need to create and implement a RTW Program. RTW Programs play an important role in disability management and injury prevention.

### Employer Benefits:

- stronger workplace safety culture;
- increased workplace morale;
- reduced or eliminated WSCC claims costs; and
- sustained skilled workforce.

### Worker Benefits:

- increased morale;
- gained independence;
- quickened recovery time (depending on injury); and
- lessened financial burden of being off work.

**Call the WSCC at 1-800-661-0792 to order.**

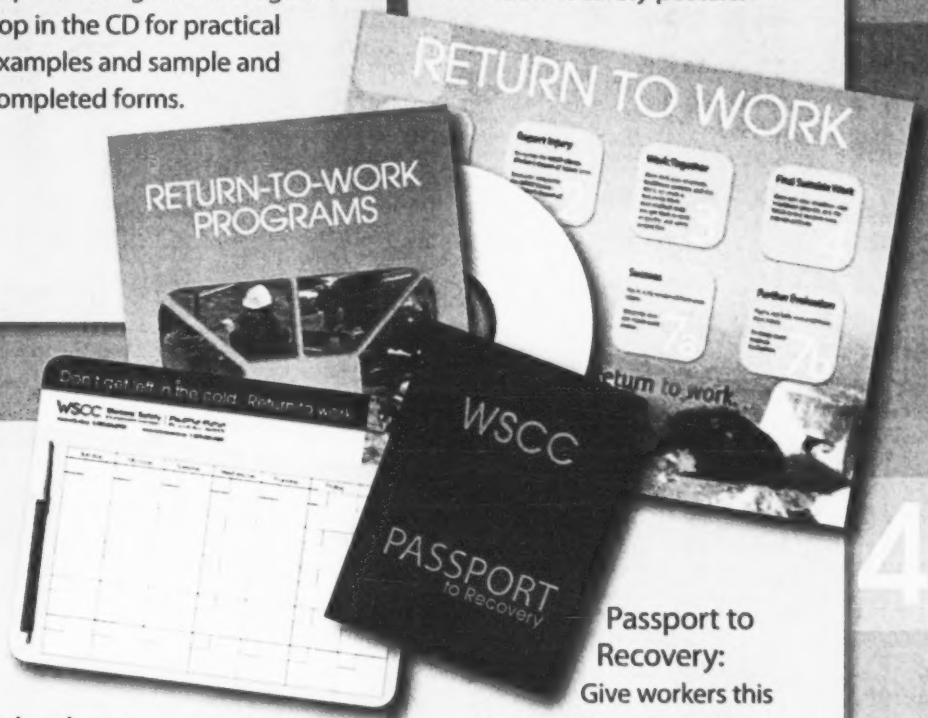
# What's in your Return-to-Work Toolkit?

1

Handbook and CD: Work through the handbook to learn the steps of creating and implementing a RTW Program. Pop in the CD for practical examples and sample and completed forms.

2

Safety Posters: Help share the message of safety in your workplace with the wide selection of safety posters.




3

Calendar: Get a handle on your schedule with this helpful dry-erase monthly calendar.

4

Passport to Recovery: Give workers this pocket booklet to help them better understand the RTW process and their role within it.

**Don't leave workers in the cold. Help them return to work.**

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www.wcb.nt.ca 1.800.661.0792 www.wcbnunavut.ca 1.877.404.4407

# Congratulations!

**The Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission congratulates the winners of the North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week Colouring Contest.**

## NWT

**Nura Jalil Aga,**
Age 8,
Yellowknife

**Phillip Cimon,**
Age 9,
Yellowknife

**Claudia Koe,**
Age 7,
Fort McPherson

## NUNAVUT

**Anika Akulujuk,**
Age 3,
Pangnirtung

**Tommy Alariaq Arloo,**
Age 11,
Arviat

**Kathy Etuk,**
Age 6,
Cape Dorset

Thank you to everyone who participated in NAOSH Week activities.
Hope you join us again next year.

WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission | ᐃᖃᓗᐊᓂᔪᒃᑯᑦ ᐊᑕᐅᓯᒪᔪᑦ ᐊᑐᐊᓘᑕᐅᔪᓂᒃ ᐊᑎᒪ ᓇᓕᓕᒫᓂᒃ ᑲᑎᕐᓗᒍ

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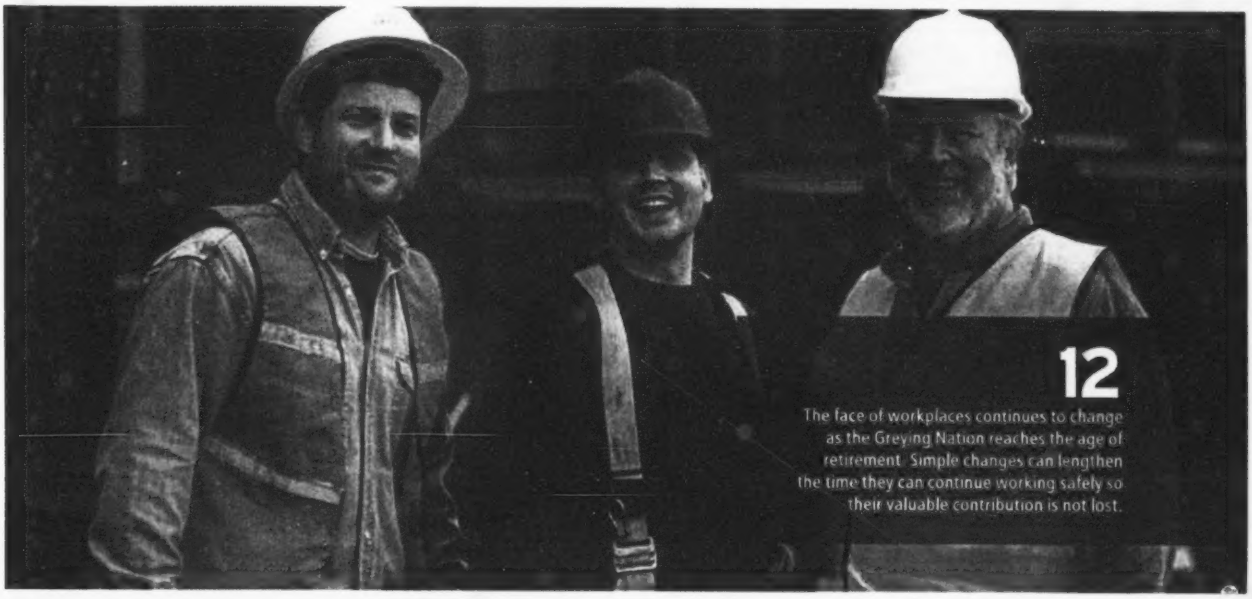


**12**

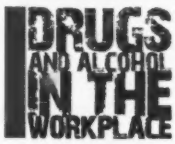
The face of workplaces continues to change as the Greying Nation reaches the age of retirement. Simple changes can lengthen the time they can continue working safely so their valuable contribution is not lost.

reflections MAGAZINE

WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission | ᐊᖏᓚᐃᔪᖅᓯᒪᓂᖅ ᐱᒋᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐊᑐᓕᕐᓂᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᓄᓇᕗᑦ

Our Mission is to promote workplace safety and care for injured workers.

**Radon | 17**
In 1945 Japan, nuclear bombs killed countless civilians in two devastating explosions. Today in the Northwest Territories, the radon gas by product from mining the uranium for those bombs might still be an invisible threat.

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A pick-me-up can really let you down when it comes to workplace safety. We explore the dangers of substance abuse and it goes far beyond a loss in productivity. Working while impaired puts you and your coworkers at risk.

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# President's Letter

Photo courtesy of Ryerson Clark

Everyday at the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) we work closely with northern employers and workers. It is through these day-to-day interactions that we create partnerships with stakeholders like you.

Partnerships are relationships between individuals or groups, who cooperate and share responsibility to achieve a goal.

We hope you, as our partners, share our goal of developing workplace safety cultures across the North.

To achieve this goal northern workers and employers must focus on two things: safety and care. We must make a commitment to provide northerners with the tools and resources they need to work safe every day. We must also care for injured workers and help them in their recovery and Return-to-Work.

Reflections is just one of the many ways we reach out to employers and workers in the North to build meaningful partnerships. It is an example of our commitment to safety and care.

I hope you take the opportunity to explore the resources and tools available within these pages. This issue contains valuable information on the history of workers compensation, the effects drugs and alcohol have on safety in the workplace, a then and now look at radon, and safety and our changing workforce. Plus more on best practices and WSCC services and programs.

We look forward to continuing our work with you to build strong workplace safety cultures. Together we can eliminate workplace injuries and illnesses.

Anne S. Clark
*President & CEO*

## Governance Council

**Bill Aho**
*Chairperson*

Bill Aho of Yellowknife was appointed as Chairperson of the Governance Council on May 14, 2009 for a one-year term. Mr. Aho served as an employer representative since 2004. During this time, he held positions as Vice-Chairperson of the Council and Vice Chairperson of the Audit Committee.

**J.B. (Ben) McDonald**
*Director, Labour Representative*

J.B. (Ben) McDonald of Yellowknife was appointed to the Governance Council as a Labour Representative effective April 1, 2008, for a three-year term.

**John Vander Velde**
*Director, Labour Representative*

John Vander Velde of Iqaluit was appointed to the Governance Council as a Labour Representative effective September 1, 2008, for a three-year term.

**Karin McDonald**
*Director, Employer Representative*

Karin McDonald of Inuvik was appointed to the Governance Council as an Employer Representative on October 15, 2004, for a three-year term. In October 2007, Ms. McDonald was reappointed for a two-year term.

**Fred Koe**
*Director, Public Interest Representative*

Fred Koe of Yellowknife was appointed to the Governance Council as a Public Interest Representative on February 1, 2007, for a three-year term. Mr. Koe is the Chair of the Audit Committee.

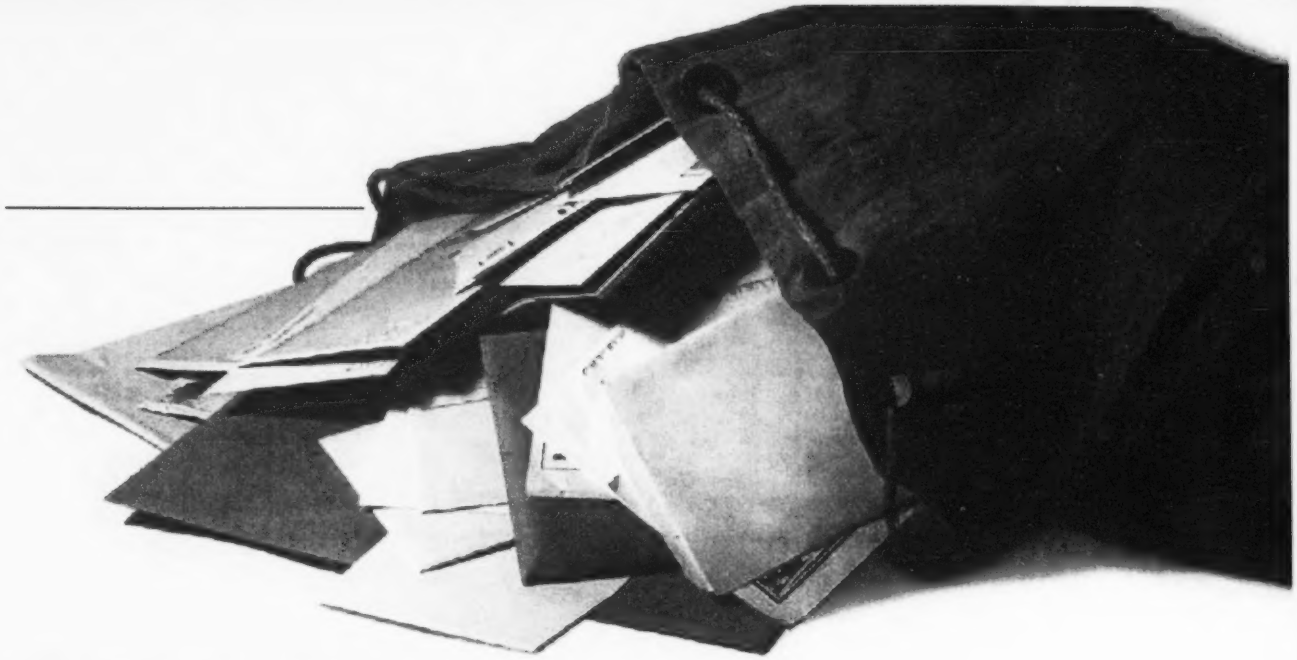
**Lynda Gunn**
*Director, Public Interest Representative*

Lynda Gunn of Iqaluit was appointed to the Governance Council as a Public Interest Representative effective April 1, 2009, for a three-year term.

**Doug Witty**
*Director, Employer Representative*

Doug Witty of Yellowknife was appointed to the Governance Council as an Employer Representative effective September 1, 2009, for a three-year term.

*For more information on any of our Governance Council members please visit our website at* **www.wcb.nt.ca** *or* **www.wcbnunavut.ca.**



# Did We Deliver?

We want to hear from you – good or bad. Let us know what you think.

**The Mission of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (WSCC) is clear – promote workplace safety and care for injured workers. *Reflections* plays a big part in getting the job done.**

**We want to hear from you – good or bad. If *Reflections* inspires you, encourages you, gives you insight into how the WSCC works, or just gets you thinking about the importance of safety in the workplace, please let us know.**

**Send your comments and/or questions to:**

reflections MAGAZINE
Box 8888, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2R3

**Or send us an email at:**
reflections@wcb.nt.ca

WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission | ᑭᓇᐅᔭᓕᕆᔨᒃᑯᑦ ᐊᒥᐱᖃᑎᒌᒃᓴᖅ

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**WSCC Inuvik**
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151 Mackenzie Road
Inuvik, NT X0E 0T0
T. 867.678.2301
F. 867.678.2302

## There are two basic types of hearing protection: earplugs and earmuffs.

| | DESCRIPTION | EFFECTIVENESS | FIT |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EARPLUGS** | Reduce noise when properly fitted. Inserted into the ear canal.<br>**Two main forms:**<br>1. Pre-moulded (preformed)<br>2. Mouldable (formable) | Help protect against high intensity noise. Can reduce noise levels by up to 30 decibels. | Use the correct size to provide a snug fit and proper position in the ear. |
| **EARMUFFS** | Seal out noise when properly worn. Fit over the whole ear to seal out noise. | Help protect against moderate and severe high intensity noise. Can help reduce noise levels by up to 25 decibels. | Your entire ear should fit inside the earmuff cup. If they have a headband, it should fit snugly against the top of your head. Make sure your hair and/or glasses don't interfere with the earmuff seal. |

# Hearing Protection

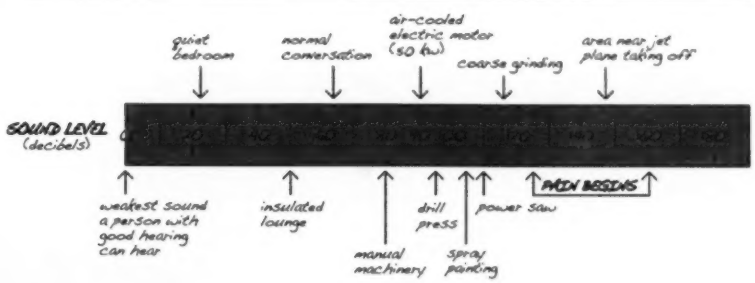
You are ready to rock out. Standing in the front row at a concert, you wait for your favourite band to take the stage. The concert is awesome, the band performs even better than you imagine. After the concert you notice that your ears are still ringing leaving you feeling like you are still there. What gives?

When you expose your ears to excessive noise you damage your hearing. This damage may be temporary or permanent, depending on the noise and the type of exposure. With temporary hearing loss, like at a concert, hearing usually returns to normal after a period away from noise. Permanent hearing loss happens when you continually expose your ears to excess noise. Your ears cannot recover.

At work, noise is more than just an annoyance. It's a hazard. In Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, the maximum noise exposure limit is 85 decibels for 8 hours, in any 24-hour period. As the noise level increases, the permitted exposure decreases. If your workplace exposes your workers to excessive noise, you are responsible to reduce the noise where possible to an acceptable level. Otherwise you must provide your workers with the appropriate hearing protection to work safely.

Any hearing protection you provide must comply with the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Standard.

**How do you know how much noise is too much noise?**
This diagram shows common noises and their sound levels:



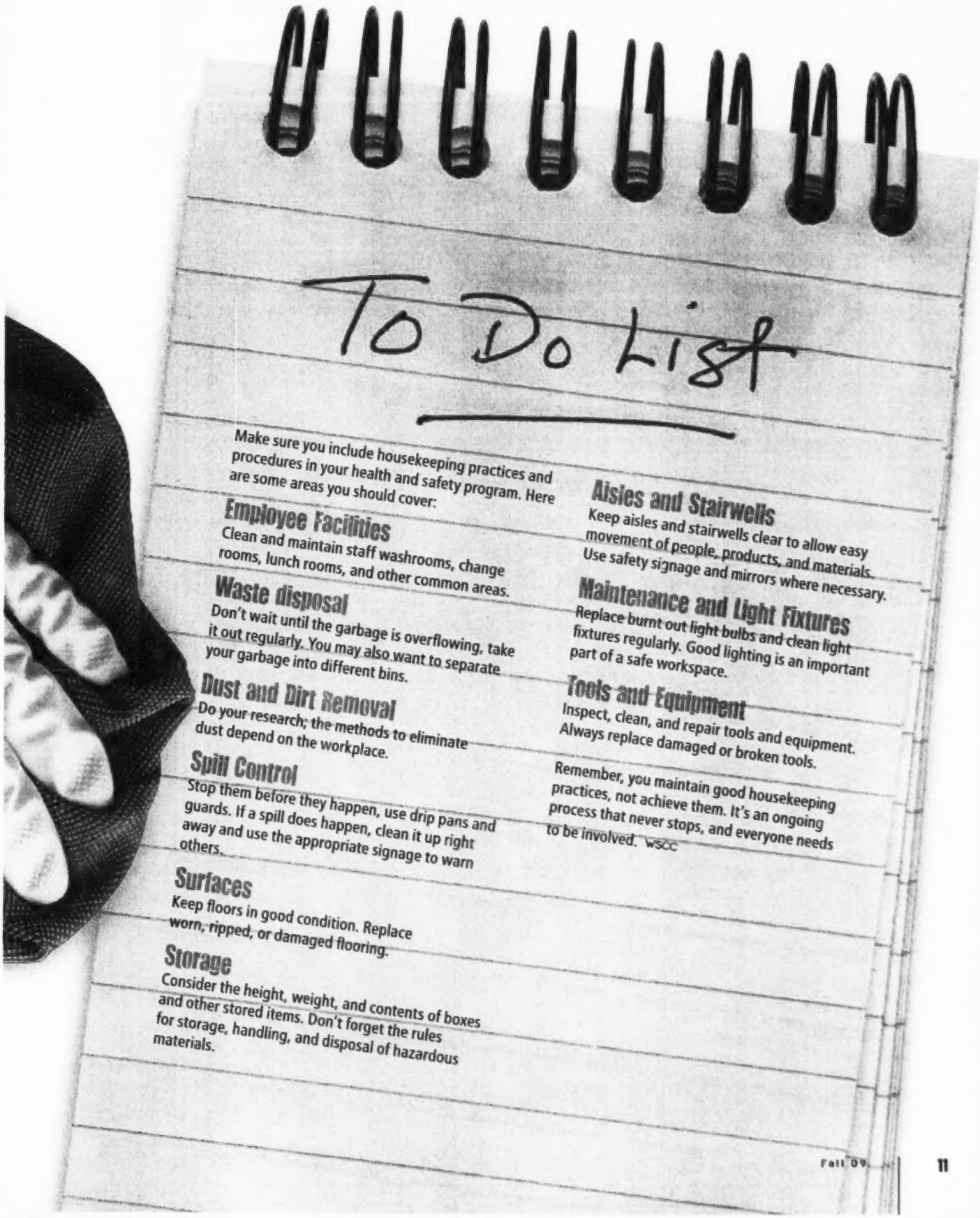

To determine what type of hearing protection your workers need, consider the following five factors:

1. **Noise Levels:** *The levels of noise your workers encounter.*
2. **Noise Reduction Rating (NRR):** *The effectiveness of the hearing protection at reducing noise (the higher the rating, the greater the effectiveness).*
3. **Exposure:** *The type of exposure (continuous or intermittent) and the frequency (daily, once a week, etc.).*
4. **Environment:** *The hearing protection must suit the work environment in which your workers will encounter the noise. Consider other hazards that will require your workers to wear additional PPE that may affect their hearing protection (safety glasses, face shields).*
5. **Fit:** *The worker must be comfortable wearing the type of protection. It must fit them properly to be effective.*

Your workers' hearing is not something that you can repair or replace. Be proactive. Make sure you provide your workers with the appropriate hearing protection and that they wear it. Silence is golden, but not when it lasts a lifetime. WSCC

# Housekeeping @ work

Good housekeeping doesn't just mean dusting, sweeping, and vacuuming. When it comes to workplace safety, good housekeeping means more than cleaning up a "mess". It plays a big part in preventing workplace injuries and incidents. When done properly it can help you avoid a "mess" in the first place. There are many reasons to promote and practice good housekeeping. Health and safety in your workplace top the list!



# To Do List

Make sure you include housekeeping practices and procedures in your health and safety program. Here are some areas you should cover:

## Employee Facilities

Clean and maintain staff washrooms, change rooms, lunch rooms, and other common areas.

## Waste disposal

Don't wait until the garbage is overflowing, take it out regularly. You may also want to separate your garbage into different bins.

## Dust and Dirt Removal

Do your research; the methods to eliminate dust depend on the workplace.

## Spill Control

Stop them before they happen, use drip pans and guards. If a spill does happen, clean it up right away and use the appropriate signage to warn others.

## Surfaces

Keep floors in good condition. Replace worn, ripped, or damaged flooring.

## Storage

Consider the height, weight, and contents of boxes and other stored items. Don't forget the rules for storage, handling, and disposal of hazardous materials.

## Aisles and Stairwells

Keep aisles and stairwells clear to allow easy movement of people, products, and materials. Use safety signage and mirrors where necessary.

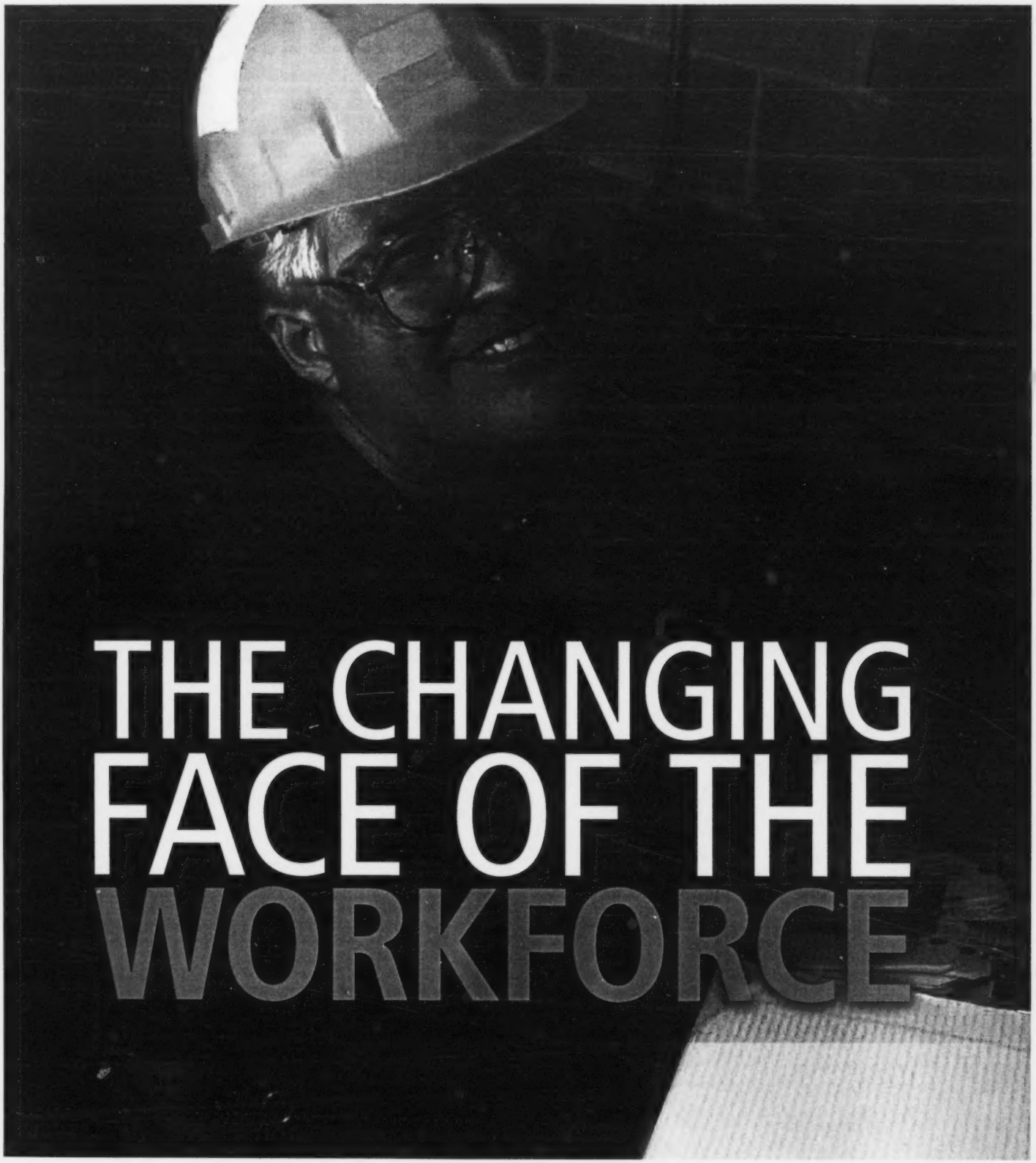
## Maintenance and Light Fixtures

Replace burnt out light bulbs and clean light fixtures regularly. Good lighting is an important part of a safe workspace.

## Tools and Equipment

Inspect, clean, and repair tools and equipment. Always replace damaged or broken tools.

Remember, you maintain good housekeeping practices, not achieve them. It's an ongoing process that never stops, and everyone needs to be involved. WSCC



# THE CHANGING FACE OF THE WORKFORCE

Big things can happen in short periods of time. The birth of the Internet taught us that lesson. We're no longer fazed by technological advancements. We casually accept downloads as we sip coffee and breeze through our morning emails. Upgrades are the norm, and we understand that technology mutates.

We love our bigger flat screens, our high-definition picture, fancy BlackBerry, and loaded cell phones. If we want to, we could spend our days glued to a screen of some sort or another. But beware of the shiny new gadgets invading our lives and workplaces. There is a danger in being too distracted by the technology itself. We could blissfully enter the next decade of business unaware of how the real face of the workplace is changing once again... the face of the workers themselves.

Take a couple seconds, pull your eyes away from your computer screen, and look around you. Really look at the people you work with. Notice anything? In some circles they are known as the Greying Nation, and according to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, as early as 2011, they will represent 41% of the total working population. I'm talking about older workers, age 45 and up. This demographic is going to alter the way we do business, just like the World Wide Web changed the way we communicate.

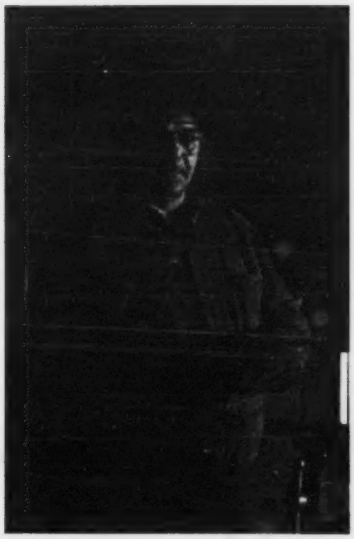
Having so many workers approach retirement at the same time threatens to create a labour shortage. It begs the obvious question - who's going to carry the extra workload left behind? Not only does this pose operational issues that affect productivity and efficiency, there are also major health and safety concerns attached to this. Yet another issue to grapple with is the immense history and wisdom potentially lost when older workers leave. The practical work experience and knowledge a person earns after years on the job is irreplaceable. Barb Hood, Executive Director of the Northwest Territories Seniors' Society, completely agrees. "History repeats itself. An older worker can see things happening and comment on how to adjust to a situation that just cropped up. The fundamental concepts are still valuable."

The Seniors' Society advocates on behalf of older adults age 50 plus. The only territory-wide organization of its kind, it has a membership of 1,000. Hood strongly believes the Greying Nation continues to be a viable economic resource that should not be overlooked. "Employers need to be encouraged to look at the value older adults bring to the workplace in terms of experience and flexibility. Older workers are more accommodating and flexible."

Case in point: Gerry Villeneuve. Sporting a baseball cap, trendy distressed jeans, and a sleek bomber jacket, you would never guess that Villeneuve is in his 60's. His youthful personality immediately comes through as he springs from his seat to grasp your hand in a firm handshake. He looks you right in the eye. He is happy to meet you, and happy to welcome you to the conversation. Villeneuve speaks with a thick French accent, and sometimes stumbles with the English translation, but no one has trouble understanding his passion for work. "I love work. I love hard work. It's good for the mind. You got to keep the body busy and the mind busy. It's a big part of our life."

Villeneuve works with North American Tungsten. He was an underground miner for years until he suffered a serious workplace incident three years ago. After months of recovery and rehabilitation, Villeneuve returned to work. While some might have looked at the injury as a ticket to early retirement, that wasn't even a consideration for Villeneuve. He was committed to getting back to work and his employer was behind him 100%. Management at North American Tungsten appreciated what Villeneuve brought to the team. Instead of focusing on what he couldn't do, they looked at what he could do. Working together, Villeneuve and North American Tungsten created and agreed on a plan to accommodate

Having so many workers approach retirement at the same time threatens to create a labour shortage.



Villeneuve's physical abilities and restrictions. On September 24, 2008, Villeneuve went back to work underground in a different position, but is still on the same shift, working with the same people as before.

North American Tungsten's ability to adapt the workplace to meet Villeneuve's needs is an excellent example of the accommodation process at work. The accommodation process is a smart business practice that promotes workplace health and safety and it is not limited to cases like Villeneuve's, when injured workers are trying to get back to work. The process needs to be universal and apply to everyone, all the time. Think about it: we would never ask a woman eight-months pregnant to do heavy manual labour work. Her employer modifies her job duties to accommodate her pregnancy.

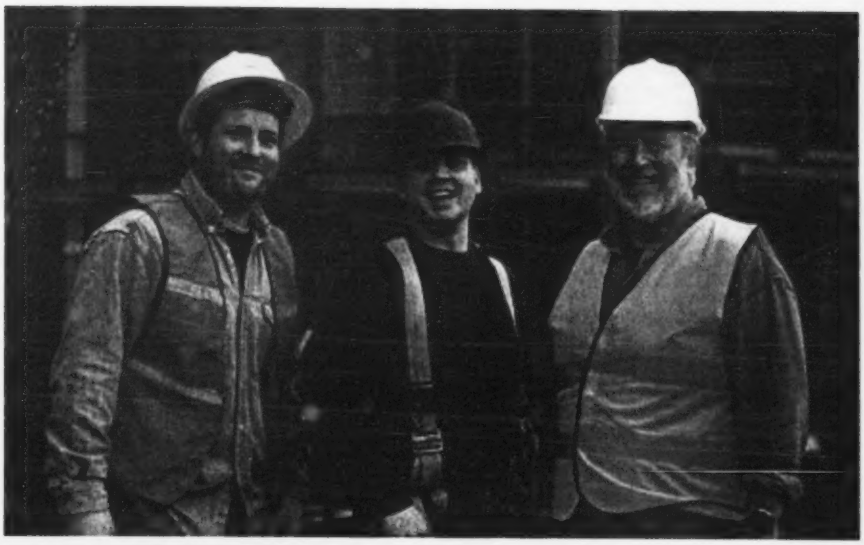
Different workers have different needs at different stages of their lives. Naturally, this is also the case as we age. As much as we fight it, getting older is unavoidable. Our bodies change as part of the normal aging process. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety reports that from the age of 20 to 60, we lose 15 to 20% of our overall body strength. On top of this, common medical issues start popping up. Things like hearing loss, reduced vision, and slower reaction time. Another alarming trend, according to Statistics Canada research, the majority of older workers report they suffer from a chronic condition, anything from back pain to arthritis.

These stats might sound severe but the situation really isn't. Once again, it boils down to practicing the process of accommodation. Dr. Eileen Peters specializes in geriatrics and says, "A 55-year old can't necessarily physically do what a 25 year old can do. There is more potential for injury and ergonomic issues are more important to address (in the workplace)."

Life Care Planning, a company based in Yellowknife, provides occupational rehabilitation and rehabilitation consulting services throughout the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. "We have conditioning work programs, perform assessments on people and physical demands analysis, as well ergonomic assessments," says Marion Hutton, an Occupational Therapist with Life Care Planning. "We are looking at what they can and can't do and what changes can be made to their environments to help."
Hutton explains that it is a lack of understanding that sometimes hampers the accommodation process. "Employers want to accommodate the worker but they don't know how." Hutton strongly suggests employers invest in having a Functional Capacity Evaluation done for workers. "A Functional Capacity Evaluation is a one-day evaluation that looks at physical tolerances related to strength, endurance, speed, and flexibility, using standardized assessments."

There are lots of ways to make a workplace friendly for the Greying Nation. Sometimes the accommodation is a simple modification with a small price tag. Hutton urges employers to weigh the cost difference between losing older workers' experience or accommodating their specific health and safety needs.

Jenny Crawford also works with Life Care Planning. She is the sole member of the Association of Canadian Ergonomists practicing in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Crawford recently attended



an ergonomic conference where the topic of older workers was heavily discussed. "Some common injuries associated with older workers are reduced muscle strength and tissue tolerance, reduced eye sight and cognitive abilities, and hearing loss."

According to one conference presenter, Environmental and Occupational Risk Management (EORM), ergonomic prevention is key. EORM provided numerous practical examples, like incorporating better lighting and increasing visibility of stairs to address reduced vision. To help those with hearing impairments, decrease background noise, integrate visual aids, and install warning lights. To prevent slips, trips, and falls, a common workplace hazard affecting all workers, use skid resistant mats on slippery floors and install stair treads.

"Arthritis is an injury that needs to be accommodated in the workplace with older workers. It affects range of motion, mobility, and strength," adds Crawford. EORM suggests investigating the design of certain objects. Look at the size and shape of controls. Simple things like installing push buttons, lever handles, and switches can make a huge difference for the more than four million Canadians living with arthritis or rheumatism.

There are lots of ways to make a workplace friendly for the Greying Nation. Sometimes the accommodation is a simple modification with a small price tag.

The process of accommodation takes a team effort. While employers need to take responsibility for the health and safety of workers, workers also need to take an active role in the process and communicate their physical abilities. "Older workers need to be encouraged or allowed to identify their needs. We can't expect employers to read our minds, and we don't want them to assume," says Barb Hood.

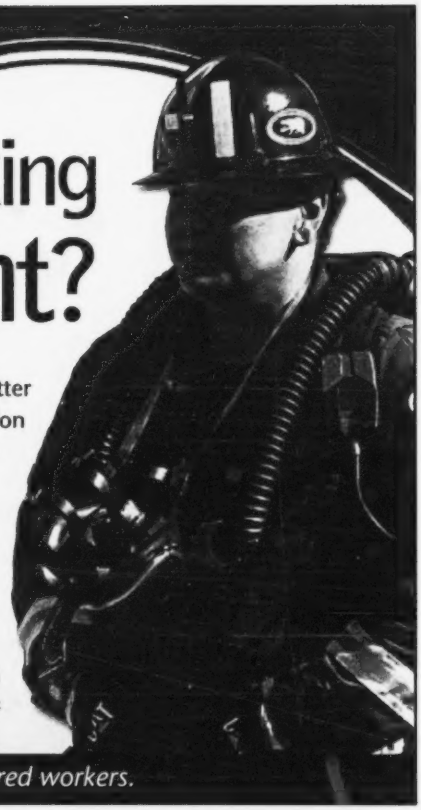
We all suffer through the growing pains of learning new technology. Large fingers are not designed for efficient texting, but with perseverance this new art form can be perfected. We have challenged the traditional means of communication in ways we never could have predicted. Time zones and geographic boundaries no longer pose a barrier. We're continually thrown for a loop, but we adjust. We make accommodations for the new methods of communication, and from that business operations and work processes take on a new shape.

The same evolution needs to happen in support of the Greying Nation. "If you're feeling well, and want to be active in the workplace, there should be the opportunity to do that. Age should not be a barrier," comments Hood, and she's absolutely right. Age shouldn't dictate our place in the workforce. Our focus shouldn't be on the colour of our hair, but on what we can all healthily and safely do. WSCC

# Looking for Insight?

Find it online. ***Insight: A Look At Safety & Service*** is an e-newsletter that speaks directly to northerners. Filled with current information on safety and WSCC operations, it gives you insight on how to keep yourself and those around you safe.

**Sign up today at www.wcb.nt.ca or www.wcbnunavut.ca.**



WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission | ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐊᑕᐅᓯᖅᑎᑦ ᐊᒻᒪᓗ ᓇᓗᓇᐃᔭᖅᑎᑦ ᖃᐅᔨᓴᖅᑎᑦ

*Promote workplace safety and care for injured workers.*

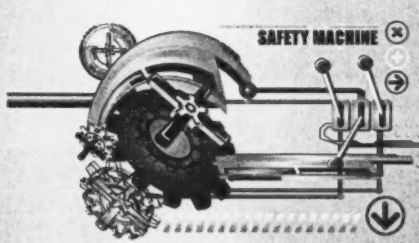
# EDUCATION THE SAFETY BRAIN

Get your **safety gears** rolling by making safety education a top priority.

The WSCC offers **FREE** safety education programs that run throughout the year. Keep your eyes on local media for program dates and times or get clicking on www.wcb.nt.ca for more information.

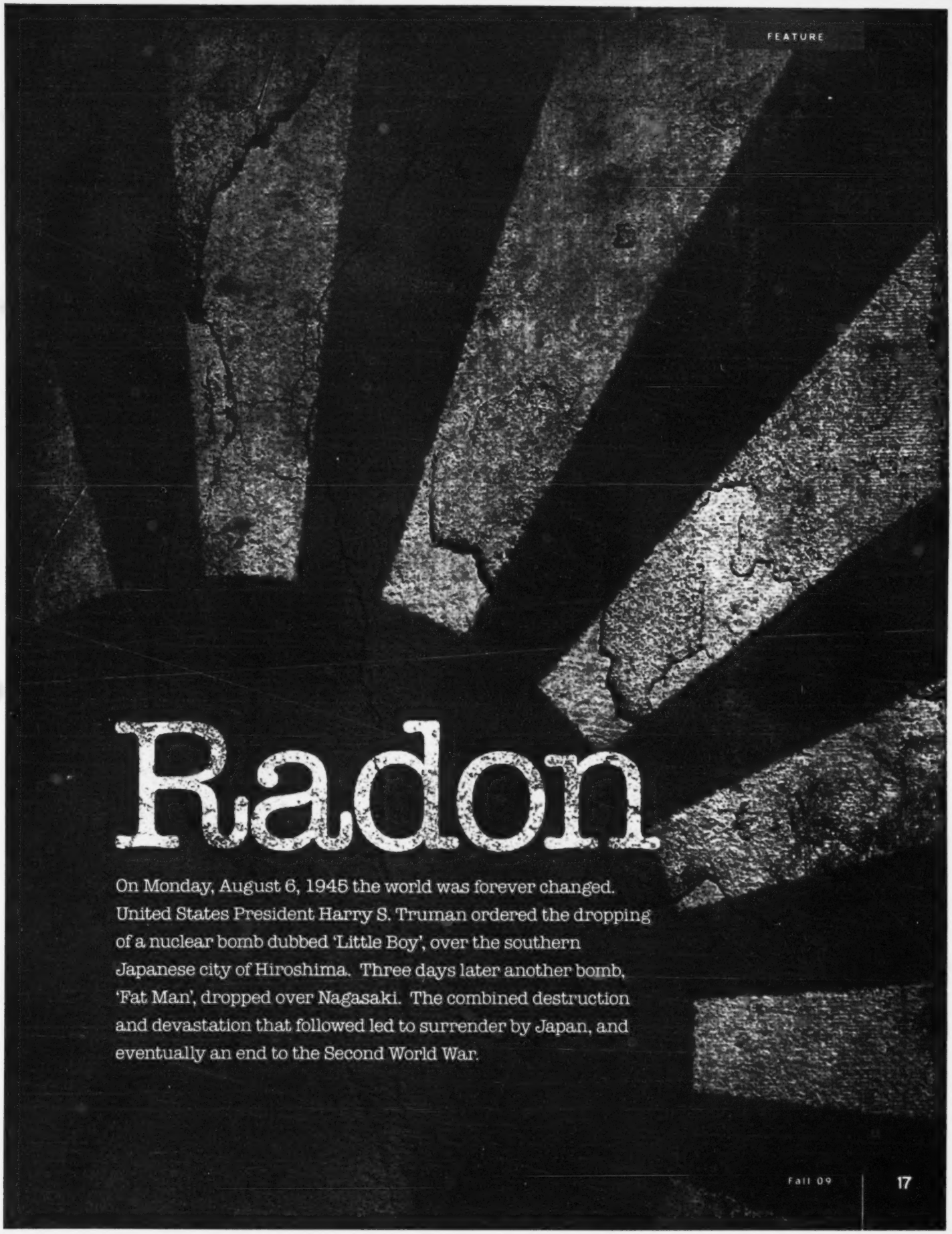
## Call 1-800-661-0792
## AND SWITCH ON THE SAFETY MACHINE.

**Find a current schedule of WSCC safety education programs at www.wcb.nt.ca.**




WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission | ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐊᑕᐅᓯᖅᑎᑦ ᐊᒻᒪᓗ ᓇᓗᓇᐃᔭᖅᑎᑦ ᖃᐅᔨᓴᖅᑎᑦ

BRING THE SAFETY BOOKLET TO YOU



# Radon

On Monday, August 6, 1945 the world was forever changed. United States President Harry S. Truman ordered the dropping of a nuclear bomb dubbed 'Little Boy', over the southern Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later another bomb, 'Fat Man', dropped over Nagasaki. The combined destruction and devastation that followed led to surrender by Japan, and eventually an end to the Second World War.

Many Canadians are not aware that these historical actions have a Northern connection. A mine operating in Canada's arctic supplied uranium used in the Manhattan project, the project that built the two nuclear bombs.

Located on the shores of Great Bear Lake, about 440 kilometres north of Yellowknife, Port Radium is the town site where workers lived while the Eldorado Mine operated from the 1930's to 1980. Metals mined during this time included silver, copper, and uranium. At the time, knowledge of the dangers and effects of radiation exposure were not widespread. As a result, exposure to one of the by products of uranium, radon, was not monitored or controlled.

Uranium is a radioactive mineral, commonly used in medicine. As it breaks down, or decays, it forms radon. This odourless and colourless radioactive gas breaks down even further to form particles known as radon daughters. When workers breathe the gas and particles into their lungs, they break down even further, releasing small bursts of energy that damage nearby lung tissue. Damaged lung tissue cells can develop cancer when they reproduce. (see Diagram 1)

On average, 10% of lung cancers are attributable to radon exposure worldwide. The correlation between exposure and cancer is so high that the United States Surgeon General warns radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the US. It is second only to smoking. According to Health Canada, in 2006, an estimated 1,900 lung cancer deaths in Canada were due to radon exposure.

Action is happening on the health and safety front from a better understanding of the risk associated with radon exposure results. For miners, stringent health and safety standards result in significantly lower levels of average radon exposure. According to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the current average exposure for today's uranium miners is about 800 times less than that for past miners in Port Radium. This reduction in average exposure reduces the risk of getting lung cancer.

Radon exposure is not limited to the mining industry. It is naturally present in the environment. As a gas, it can move easily through the soil into the atmosphere, or into buildings. This means you can become exposed to radon in homes, workplaces, schools, and other buildings that you may occupy.

Outside, radon is not as much of a concern. The levels of radon are generally low as it gets diluted by the atmosphere. When radon gets into a building, it's a different story. If proper ventilation or filtration is not in place to remove it, radon continues to break down, continuously releasing harmful radon daughter particles. If the concentration is high enough, or the exposure long enough, lung cancer can result.

You can't detect radon by sight or smell. The only way for employers to know if radon is present in their workplaces is through testing. According to Cara Benoit, a WSCC Industrial Hygienist, this involves taking either long-term or short-term measurements of the levels of radon in air inside the building.

"The first step to know if you should test for radon is determining the type of structure," says Benoit. "Buildings constructed using concrete slab foundations can cause melting of the permafrost below." This melting can result in cracks in the foundation that allow radon from the soil beneath to pass into the building.

It's not just slab foundation buildings that can allow radon to enter. "Any building with a basement, or where there is direct access to the rock, could be a pathway for radon."

**Diagram 1: The Formation of Radon**

Uranium ▸ Thorium ▸ Radium ▸ Radon ▸ Radon Daughters

Short-term testing is not as complicated as you might think. "You can purchase special charcoal canister testers from larger building supply stores, or order the testers through them," says Benoit. "You place the canister at the lowest occupied level in the building, and leave it there for a minimum of 48 hours. At the end of your sampling period, you seal the device and send it to a lab for analysis."

With long-term testing you use different testing devices than those used for short-term tests. The device stays in your building for more than 90 days, and provides a reading that better represents your average year-round radon level than a short-term test.

Long-term tests are often conducted after an initial short-term test confirms a radon level which either is close to or exceeds the acceptable guideline. Health Canada establishes this guideline, and recently revised it from the previous level that was in place since 1988. This change is a direct result of the conclusive link between radon exposure and the development of lung cancer. The new guideline of 200 Becquerel's per cubic metre (Bq/m3) is one quarter of the previous guideline of 800 Bq/m3. If your testing results are higher than the new guideline of 200 Bq/m3, you need to take action.

The first step employers can take to lower the levels of radon inside a building is to prevent it from getting in. This means sealing out any cracks in concrete floors, foundations, walls, and around pipes. Other steps you can take are increasing the ventilation, and filtering the air inside. The effectiveness of these approaches at reducing the level of radon in your building depends on the building, the level of radon, how the radon enters and how thoroughly you perform the job. While it is practically impossible to eliminate radon from within a building, you can lower it to a level where you reduce the risk.

Work continues to increase the awareness of radon and its risk. Health Canada is continuing to test federal buildings across the country, with a number of provinces testing public buildings like schools, health care and daycare facilities.

"In the North we are not as fortunate as other regions in that we don't really have a benchmark of radon levels, as widespread testing has not happened yet," says Benoit. "We are looking at participating in the National Study on residential and commercial buildings, to help build this data and determine where action may be necessary. Ideally we would like to work with Health Canada to help encourage employers to begin testing for radon in their workplaces."

A lot happened since that fateful August day in Japan. The world has changed, and with it our knowledge of the risks associated with radon exposure. Through increased awareness of the risk of radon exposure, workers now have a greater level of protection. As the testing increases so too will the assurance that we turned knowledge into action, improving the safety of workers today and into the future.

*For more information contact WSCC Prevention Services at 1-800-661-0792 in Yellowknife, or 1-877-404-4407 in Iqaluit.* WSCC

**Diagram 2: Measuring Radon**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Becquerel (Bq) | Measures the rate of radon being released into the air from a source. | 1 Bq = 1 event of radiation emission per second |
| Picocurie (pCi) | An older measurement for the rate of radon being released into the air from a source. | 27 pCi = 1 Bq |
| Becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m3) and Picocuries per litre (pCi/L) | Measures the concentration of radon in the air | 1 pCi/L= 37 Bq/$m^3$ |
| Working Level (WL) | Measures the concentration of radon daughters in the air. | 1 WL = 200 pCi/L |
| Working Level Month (WLM) | Measures the occupational exposure to radon daughters. | 1 WLM = 1 WL exposure for 170 hours |

*It is difficult to make exact calculations to determine the concentration of radon gas in the air and the correlating level of radon daughters. This is because the decay of radon (resulting in radon daughters) is not a constant.

# DRUGS AND ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE

**"I'M A MEDICINE AND I AM POISON; I CAN HELP YOU UP, OR MAKE YOU FALL; YOU HAD SOME OF THE BEST TIMES; YOU'LL NEVER REMEMBER WITH ME...ALCOHOL".**

Country music star, Brad Paisley's clever lyrics make for a good summer jam while enjoying a brewski with your BBQ. They also paint a not so pretty picture of the dark side of drugs and alcohol.

According to the 2006 NWT Addictions Report, published by the Government of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services, "...alcohol, illicit drug and tobacco use continue to be large social and public health problems, with prevalence well above the Canadian average." Survey findings also suggest, "...that approximately just over one third of the NWT population engaged in hazardous drinking practices."

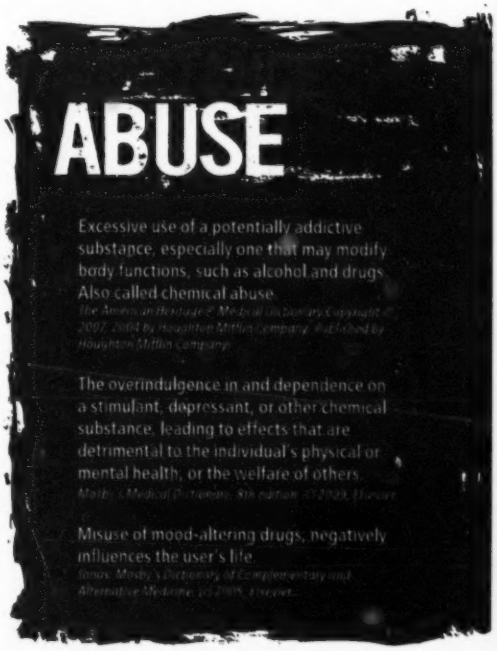
As a serious social and public health problem, the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol aren't isolated to an individual. It touches all aspects of our lives. Families, communities, and even our workplaces are adversely affected.

Growing up we were all taught that drugs and alcohol affect our behaviour, and our ability to carry out everyday activities. We know they impair our judgment, memory, concentration, coordination, and motor functions. But we sometimes forget any impairment can negatively affect the health and safety of our workplaces, and more importantly can cause serious harm to us or our co-workers.

When we talk about substance abuse and the workplace, we often assume it is drugs and alcohol used at work; which isn't always the case. To affect the workplace, substance abuse doesn't have to occur at work. Your behaviour on and off the job may adversely affect your ability to perform your job duties safely.

Think about it! You may have taken some medication for your back pain this morning, had a few too many last night, or a quick drink with the crew at lunch. These actions aren't as harmless as you may think. Whether you weren't feeling up to par and just needed help to get through the day, woke up with a hangover, or joined in with lunchtime festivities, these actions may leave you impaired.

It's not surprising that there isn't a universally accepted definition of substance abuse, which explains why the line between use and abuse isn't always black or white. However, one thing is for sure, drugs and alcohol plus work doesn't equal safety first.


ABUSE
Excessive use of a potentially addictive substance, especially one that may modify body functions, such as alcohol and drugs. Also called chemical abuse.
The overindulgence in and dependence on a stimulant, depressant, or other chemical substance, leading to effects that are detrimental to the individual's physical or mental health, or the welfare of others.
Misuse of mood-altering drugs, negatively influences the user's life.

Additional costs and problems you may face due to drug and alcohol use may include:

- *administrative losses: tardiness, extended lunch periods, and early departures;*
- *hidden costs: inconsistent work quality, cutting corners, diverted managerial time, material waste, damaged equipment; and,*
- *disciplinary actions and grievances.*

Of the many costs listed, the greatest loss you will suffer as an employer is the health and safety of your employees. You can fix equipment and inconsistencies, you can't replace a life. It only takes a second. One moment of hesitation, one poor decision, or one wrong movement can cost a life. When you're impaired and unable to fully concentrate on the task at hand, these moments, decisions, and movements aren't few or far between.

As an employer you must take an active role to address drug and alcohol use and their effects in your workplace. You must set solid expectations for your company and employees. The key to success is education.

To address the seriousness of drug and alcohol use, training and education need to go beyond safe work practices specific to your workplace. They should also include awareness about both the actual and potential risks of alcohol and drug use. This includes information on drug and alcohol policies or resources and programs available to employers, as well as information on health and wellness initiatives, active living, and nutrition.

You can educate your employees through:

- *orientation workshops;*
- *formal staff meetings;*
- *toolbox or safety meetings; and,*
- *newsletters, pamphlets, and brochures.*

In addition, you should educate your employees, more specifically supervisors, on how to recognize and deal with substance abuse issues. Each of these tools will form an

CONGRATULATIONS
Thank you to all participants in the 2009 Mine Rescue Competition.
We are proud of your dedication to workplace safety.
WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission
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important part of your health and safety program and commitment to a drug free workplace.

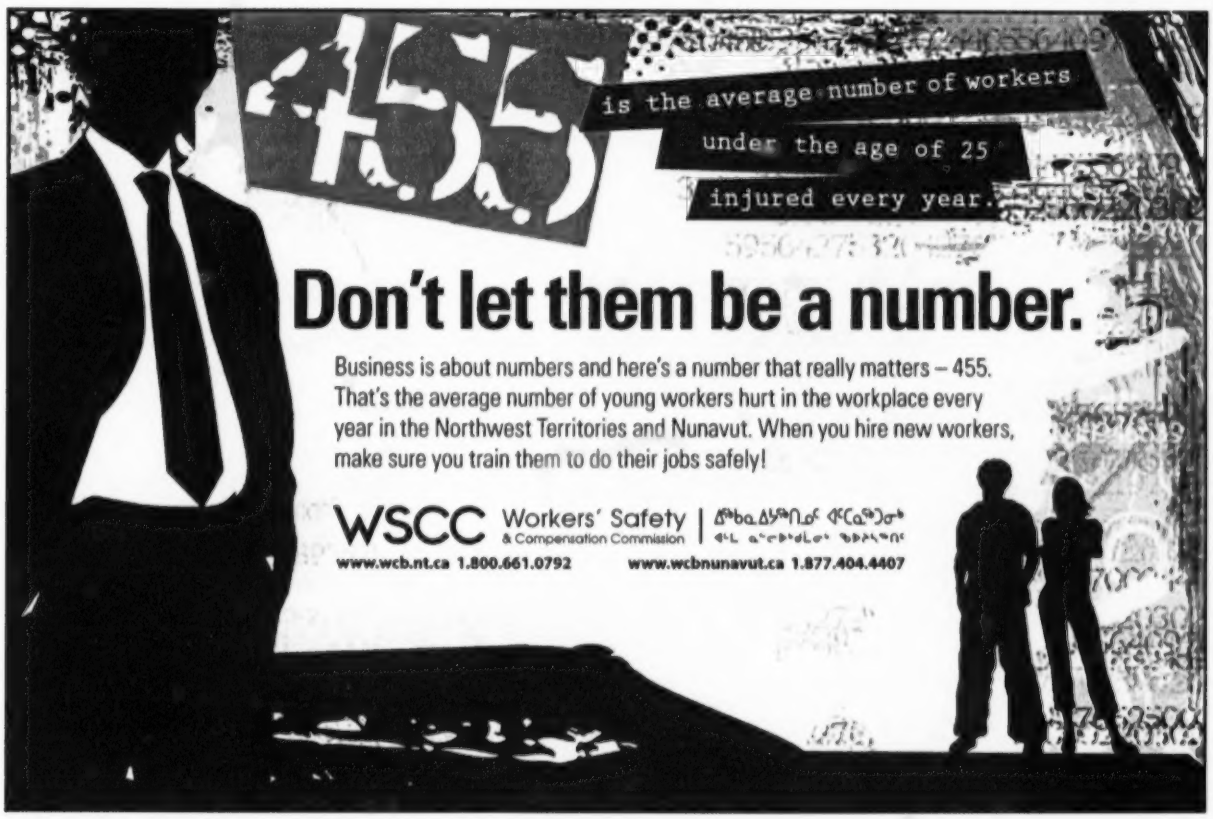
To set a solid standard of expectation you must also lead by example. Employees will look to you and their supervisors as models of behaviour. Your actions will speak lengths about your commitment to the safety of your employees and the workplace. To maintain respect for your workplace, and the safety of you and your employees, you must demonstrate behaviours consistent with the standards you set.

Training and education are extremely important. As an employer you must ensure there are internal resources available to support those who need help or someone to talk to. Many employers seek outside resources to provide their employees with additional assistance. A commonly used resource is an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). They help employees deal with personal problems that may negatively impact work performance, health and well-being. These programs are great resources for helping employers address alcohol and drug related issues in the workplace. EAPs also provide support for:

- *substance abuse;*
- *emotional distress;*
- *job stress;*
- *financial or legal concerns;*
- *harassment;*
- *work-life balance;*
- *health care concerns; and,*
- *family violence.*

You don't have all the answers. EAPs can provide your employees with a confidential resource where they seek the answers, help, support, and resources they need. Whether you want to deal specifically with substance abuse, or promote health and wellness, an EAP shows your employees that you care. It demonstrates your commitment to their overall health and well-being.

When it comes to combating the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol in the workplace, "Supervisors have the toughest role," says Judy Kainz, WSCC Chief Safety Officer. "They need to be able to make the tough calls." When you set solid expectations and have the resources, training, and support systems in place, they can!


455
is the average number of workers
under the age of 25
injured every year.
Don't let them be a number.
Business is about numbers and here's a number that really matters – 455. That's the average number of young workers hurt in the workplace every year in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. When you hire new workers, make sure you train them to do their jobs safely!
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Supervisors often find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place. They are responsible for the overall health and safety of their team, but may also find they want to protect a worker from the potential consequences of their actions. Kainz warns, "turning a blind eye or reassigning an employee to a different job task enables the behaviour." You protect an individual and expose your team to what may be an unnecessary risk. From both a management and safety perspective, "it's your job to deal with the performance issue."

Supervisors in your workplace can manage performance by ensuring:

- *job understanding - everyone has a clear understanding of the expected level of performance required to do their job;*
- *job skills - everyone has the base competencies and skills required to achieve the expected level of performance; and,*
- *job performance - performance that consistently exceeds the expected level of performance is recognized, and sporadic or inconsistent performance that falls below the expected level is promptly addressed and resolved.*

When addressing performance issues, you must also realize any type of impairment may affect an individual's ability to perform their job. Impairment isn't limited to being under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Emotional stresses, fighting a cold, or trying to juggle a family and work responsibilities are examples of issues that may prevent you from concentrating fully on your job.

When dealing with performance issues and behaviour related to drug and alcohol use, you should address it in the same fashion you would other performance issues. Why? Because a decline in work performance, or substandard work does not necessarily mean an employee has a problem associated with drugs and alcohol. When you address all performance issues in the same fashion, you reinforce your safety standard.

Substance abuse is a sensitive issue. It's important both employers and supervisors remember they aren't drug and alcohol counselors. It's not your place to diagnose or evaluate whether one of your team member's behaviour is morally acceptable. Supervisors need to be sensitive to and aware of changes in behaviour and performance. "You need to identify and document changes in a worker's job performance. Know the signs, look for the signs, and make the call," says Kainz. "You need to do what is best for the health and safety of your workplace."

With the support of your workplace health and safety program, internal responsibility system, policies, and supporting resources, you can combat the harmful affects drugs and alcohol can have in your workplace. If this article doesn't convince your employees, tell them to listen to the rest of Brad Paisley's lyrics..."Well I've been known to cause a few breakups; and I've been known to cause a few births; I can make you new friends; or get you fired from work."

*For more information contact WSCC Prevention Services at 1-800-661-0792 in Yellowknife, or 1-877-404-4407 in Iqaluit.* WSCC

| CATEGORY | EXAMPLES | EXAMPLES OF GENERAL EFFECTS |
|---|---|---|
| Alcohol | beer, wine, spirits | impaired judgement, slowed reflexes, impaired motor function, sleepiness or drowsiness, coma, overdose may be fatal |
| Cannabis | marijuana, hashish | distorted sense of time, impaired memory, impaired coordination |
| Depressants | sleeping medicines, sedatives, some tranquilizers | inattention, slowed reflexes, depression, impaired balance, drowsiness, coma, overdose may be fatal |
| Hallucinogens | LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), PCP (phencyclidine), mescaline | inattention, sensory illusions, hallucinations, disorientation, psychosis |
| Inhalants | hydrocarbons, solvents, gasoline | intoxication similar to alcohol, dizziness, headache |
| Nicotine | cigarettes, chewing tobacco, snuff | initial stimulant, later depressant effects |
| Opiates | morphine, heroin, codeine, some prescription pain medications | loss of interest, "nodding", overdose may be fatal. If used by injection, the sharing of needles may spread Hepatitis B, or C and HIV/AIDS. |
| Stimulants | cocaine, amphetamines | elevated mood, overactivity, tension/anxiety, rapid heartbeat, constriction of blood vessels |

**http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/substance.html** *(Source: Blume, S.B., "Alcohol and Drug Abuse" in the Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety 4th edition, International Labour Office, 1998)*

# Needle Stick Injuries

Needle stick injuries are far too common in the health care field. These types of injuries are caused by needles that accidentally puncture the skin.

## THE CASES:

1. While drawing blood from a patient the needle swung back, stuck in the glove and broke the skin on the worker's left index finger.
2. While doing an insulin injection the worker pricked their left thumb.

## WHAT ARE THE COMMON CAUSES OF NEEDLE STICK INJURIES?

These injuries can happen when you use, disassemble, or dispose of needles. They can occur due to: equipment design; the nature of the procedure; conditions of work; staff experience; recapping; and disposal.

## WHAT ARE THE HAZARDS OF NEEDLE STICK INJURIES?

It's not just broken skin; needle stick punctures can inject hazardous fluids into your body. Fluids like hazardous drugs and infectious blood. The accidental injection of blood-borne viruses is the greatest concern and hazard. Needle stick injuries may mean the transmission of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C.

## DOING IT RIGHT!

Here are some ways your workplace can prevent needle stick injuries:

- **Employee training**
  *Proper orientation and ongoing training will enforce how to use, disassemble, and dispose of needles, as well as how to prevent injuries.*
- **Follow recommended guidelines**
  *The Laboratory Centre for Disease Control reviews, publishes, and updates guidelines designed to protect workers from exposure to blood-borne disease. Ensure your workers know and use these guidelines.*
- **Safe Recapping Procedures**
  *Develop safe work practices for your workers to follow when recapping is necessary.*
- **Effective Disposal Systems**
  *An effective disposal system is necessary to prevent needle stick injuries. Place containers in readily available areas, specifically where needles are used. Replace containers before they are filled, and ensure they are sealed, collected, and disposed of properly.*

*For more information contact WSCC Prevention Services at 1-800-661-0792 in Yellowknife, or 1-877-404-4407 in Iqaluit.* WSCC

Go SAFE

# planting the seeds of safety...

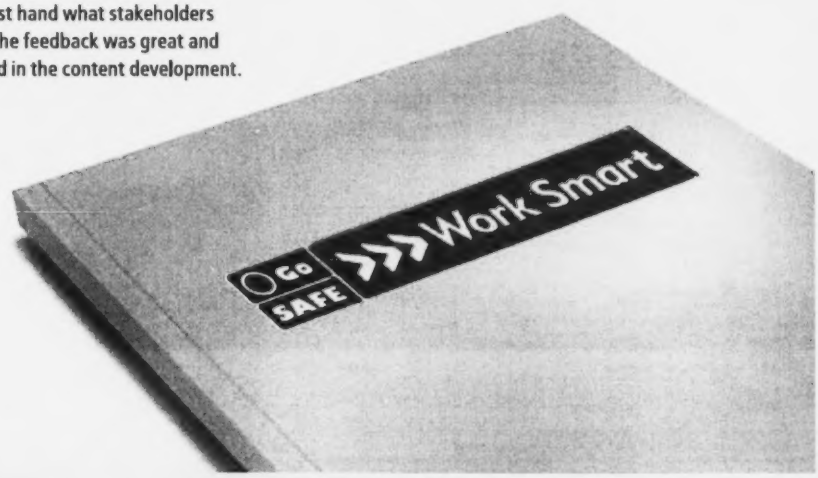
## Northerners are getting their hands dirty...
### and learning about workplace health and safety in the process.

The task is cultivating a truly northern safety program that meets the specific needs of our permafrost conditions. Employers, workers, teachers and students from across the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are piloting a new safety education program called *Go Safe: Work Smart*. Red pens in hand, they're ploughing through pages of content marking what they like, what they think works, and what areas need a little more attention.

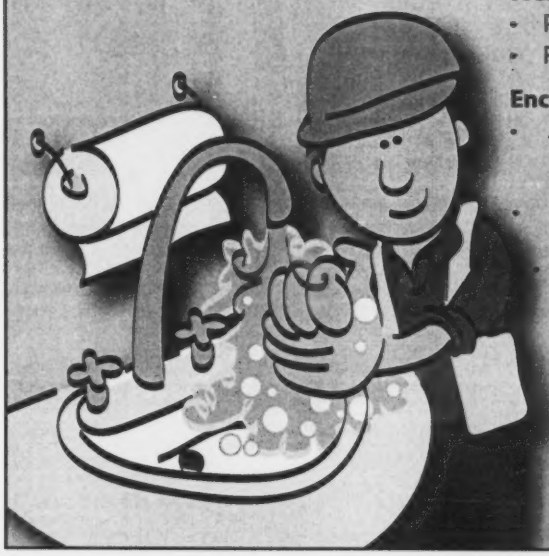
Created by the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC), *Go Safe: Work Smart* gives new workers an orientation to workplace health and safety. It covers everything from legislation to common hazards and injuries as well as the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, and WSCC incident reporting procedures. On top of this, *Go Safe: Work Smart* addresses some of the unique challenges of doing business in the North. It talks about health and safety issues like hypothermia, ice and ice road safety, working in remote locations, and wildlife safety. The program also incorporates the important voice of traditional knowledge and references various traditional activities.

Ground preparation on *Go Safe: Work Smart* started back in early 2007. The WSCC planted seeds for the program when it visited several communities to hear first hand what stakeholders wanted. The feedback was great and considered in the content development.

*Go Safe: Work Smart* is now coming into full bloom. The WSCC delivered its first training session in September, with more planned. *Go Safe: Work Smart* will replace the WSCC's existing safety education program, *Workplace Safety: Safety and the Young Worker.* WSCC



# Employers can help prevent Flu!



**Here's how:**

- Provide hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer.
- Place a hand washing poster nearby.

**Encourage employees to:**

- ***Stay home when sick.*** Most flu can be cured by rest and care at home. Call the NWT Health Line at 1-888-255-1010 if you have questions about your health.
- ***Get the annual flu vaccine.*** It prevents or lessens flu symptoms and protects others from getting sick.
- ***Cough or sneeze in their arm or a tissue.*** Not in a hand.

**For more information and posters on flu visit:**
www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca

Tele-Care
Health Line
1-888-255-1010
TDD/TTY 1-888-255-8211

Northwest Territories Health and Social Services

# Is your Estimated Payroll Accurate?

**Consider the following questions:**

* Are you filling any new positions this year?
* Has your payroll grown historically?
* Did you account for adjustments in salary?

**Make sure you have estimated accurately. In 2010, the WSCC may apply penalties for underestimating payroll based on the difference between your 2009 estimate and actual payroll.**

Contact WSCC Employer Services anytime during the year to revise your estimated payroll when there is a significant change.

WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission | ᐃᖅᑲᓇᐃᔭᖅᑎᓂᒃ ᐊᑕᐅᓯᖅᑐᓂᒃ ᐊᒻᒪ ᓇᓕᓕᒫᓂᒃ ᖃᐅᔨᓴᖅᓯᒪᓕᖅᓯᒪᔪᖅ ᖃᐅᔨᓴᖅᓯᒪᓂᖅ

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# HISTORY 101 WORKERS' COMPENSATION

According to Wikipedia, social insurance is a government sponsored insurance program that is defined by statute, serves a defined population, and is funded through premiums or taxes paid by or on behalf of participants. Participation is either compulsory or the program is heavily enough subsidized that most eligible individuals choose to participate.

## QUESTION:

**Which of the following was the first form of social insurance established in Canada?**

1. Health care;
2. Workers' Compensation; or
3. Employment Insurance.

## ANSWER:

Employment insurance surfaced in response to the Great Depression. In 1940 the Federal Government of Canada amended the Constitution and passed the *Unemployment Insurance Act*, which provided temporary relief to people in between jobs.

The birth date of universal health care coverage is 1946 and its birth place was the prairie province of Saskatchewan under the politics of Tommy Douglas.

The correct answer to the above question is the workers' compensation system. Workers' compensation's history dates back to the early 1900s. It was in the years leading up to the First World War that the province of Ontario started tackling the creation of a workers' compensation system. In 1914, the government of Ontario successfully laid the ground work for workers' compensation in Canada when it passed the *Workmen's Compensation Act*. This legislation provided the framework upon which all other provincial and territorial systems are built.

Like other social insurance programs, workers' compensation was invented to solve a problem. The problem first reared its ugly head during the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century in Europe. The Industrial Revolution introduced a new livelihood centered on factory life. Large manufacturing plants lured workers from the countryside to the city in droves. Workers who were once landowners and self-sufficient farmers, found themselves working in very structured environments answering to someone else. A clear division of labour was created. Owners and managers stood firmly on one side with workers scrambling on the other side.

The nature of work itself also greatly changed. Factory life introduced new workplace hazards that resulted in more injuries. Questions of negligence arose. Was it the worker's fault for getting hurt or was the employer responsible? Workers turned to the existing court system and tort law for recourse. Tort law addresses civil wrongs outside of contractual obligations. Under tort law, a person can win legal damages when someone is considered legally responsible for their injuries. The process was lengthy, expensive, and the results often left all parties dissatisfied.

Germany was the first country to find a solution. The wheels were set in motion when, under the direction of the German Chancellor Otto von Bismark, Germany's Emperor William the First wrote a letter to Parliament stating *"... those who are disabled from work by age and invalidity have a well-grounded claim to care from the state."*

## "THE NEW WORLD OF WORK HAS SYNDROMES, STRESS-RELATED ILLNESSES, OR DISEASES WITH LONG LATENCY PERIODS. ALL REQUIRE A DIFFERENT KIND OF SYSTEM BECAUSE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT IS HARDER."

***Morely Gunderson, Professor at the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources and the Department of Economics with the University of Toronto.***

In 1884, Germany passed *The Accident Insurance Law.* Under this legislation both workers and employers assumed financial responsibility for workers' compensation. The system had three main parts:

1. A "Sickness Fund" was created to cover short term disability costs. This fund paid benefits to workers for the first thirteen weeks of sickness or disability following a workplace incident. Both workers and employers paid into the fund with the workers covering the majority of costs at two-thirds and employers picking up the remaining portion.

2. An "Accident Fund" was created to cover long term disability costs. This fund paid benefits for disability lasting longer than thirteen weeks. Employers were responsible for covering 100% of this fund's operating costs.

3. "Disability Insurance" was created to cover disability due to old age or other causes covered elsewhere. Once again, both workers and employers paid premiums for this coverage and assumed equal responsibility at 50% each.

During the Industrial Revolution, England entertained another approach. In 1897 the *Workmen's Compensation Act* was passed and put full responsibility on individual employers to compensate workers for workplace injuries. Under the Act there was a two week waiting period for benefits that were set at 50% of earnings. The legislation wasn't universal and only applied to dangerous employment. Furthermore, the employer wasn't held liable if the worker was deemed solely to blame for their injury. Workers had a choice. They could sue the employer directly for damages and go through the existing court system or they could waive their right to sue and accept compensation.

Upon conception, workers' compensation systems required a major shift in thinking for everyone. According to Greg Krohm, Executive Director of the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions (IAIABC), one of the biggest barriers was individual self-reliance. "In the earliest systems, people didn't want to depart from tort law or negligence. It took a while for people to give up the idea that a negligent worker or employer should pay." With specific reference to North America, Krohm adds, "The culture in Canada and the US was more culturally attuned to individuals taking care of themselves. People believed they should be held responsible for their actions and the consequences thereof."

The German and English workers' compensation systems were excellent examples for Canada to study and build from. In 1910, the Chief Justice Honourable Sir William Ralph Meredith was appointed to a Royal Commission in Ontario to research workers' compensation. Over the next three years, Meredith travelled throughout Europe and North America collecting information on workers' compensation legislation and its administration.

Meredith's final report was tabled in the Ontario legislature in 1913. His report argued that the following principles create the basis of an effective and efficient workers' compensation system:

1. Collective Liability with State Administration – An independent Board is created to collect funds, adjudicate injured worker claims, and pay benefits.

2. Exclusive Jurisdiction – An independent Board is created whose operations are not attached to political scrutiny and influence. The Board is given the power to raise the required funds to cover its administration.

3. Funds Collected Through Industry – Industry (not the workforce) is required to contribute funds to the system.

4. A No Fault System – An injured worker is eligible for benefits in exchange for waiving their right to sue the employer for damages.

5. Coverage – A system is created that provides coverage in the form of benefits for workplace injuries.

6. Funding – Premium costs are determined by industry classes, taking into consideration risk and based on employer payroll.

7. Security of Payment – An injured worker's claim falls under the Accident Fund and benefits are guaranteed. The Board is responsible for the administration of the Accident Fund.

8. Benefits – Injured worker benefits continue as long as the disability lasts. The benefits relate to the earning power of the injured worker.

The Meredith Report tackled several controversial issues and presented an alternative approach to workers' compensation. The report pleaded with government officials to adopt a comprehensive system that provides long term solutions, not a band-aid fix. In his final remarks, Meredith wrote, "In these days of social and industrial unrest it is, in my judgment, of the gravest importance to the community that every proved injustice to any section or class resulting from bad or unfair laws should be promptly removed by the enactment of remedial legislation... Half measures which mitigate but do not remove injustice are, in my judgement, to be avoided."

The Meredith Report presented the Ontario government with a draft bill that was passed in 1914 as the *Workmen's Compensation Act.*

Over the course of the next 60 years, the rest of Canada followed Ontario's lead. The movement first took hold in the Maritimes when Nova Scotia passed workers' compensation legislation in 1915, and continued until the late 1970s when it finally hit the Arctic. In 1977 the territorial government of the Northwest Territories (which included Nunavut) passed the *Workers' Compensation Act,* based on the Meredith principles.

Like its social insurance counterparts (healthcare, social assistance, etc), workers' compensation systems evolve to meet the changing needs of society. The very nature of work itself has undergone significant transformations. Technological advancements continue to alter the way we do business. The invention of the computer alone turned the working world upside down.

Morely Gunderson is a Professor at the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources and the Department of Economics with the University of Toronto. Gunderson has done significant research in the area of workers' compensation. A published author, his work includes Workers' Compensation: Foundations for Reform. Gunderson shared his thoughts on the challenges the current system faces moving forward. "I think it'll continue to be the changing nature of work. Before it was a system of well defined injuries. The new world of work has syndromes, stress-related illnesses, or diseases with long latency periods. All require a different kind of system because diagnosis and treatment is harder."

The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut couldn't agree more with Gunderson. In April of 2007, the WSCC passed a Pain Disorders Policy (03.10) to address a very complicated medical issue. The WSCC's commitment to ensure its policies accurately address the current needs of the northern workforce doesn't stop there. The WSCC reviews all its policies on a three year rotation.

According to IAIABC Executive Director Greg Krohm, workers' compensation boards now have the tools and the access to information to better administrative efforts. Krohm explains that in the beginning, compensation boards had lots of questions and stumbled to find the right answers. "How do you set rates? How do you determine the amount to pay for permanent injury? How do you set medical benefits? How far do you extend coverage benefits? No one had statistics, so evaluating was bad which led to administrative barriers," says Krohm. "Now there are much better data systems. The richness of data increases our ability to analyze what's going on. We have way better analytical tools."

Another big shift in the area of workers' compensation is towards increasing incident and injury prevention efforts. As Gunderson states, "More attention can be paid to health and safety training to reduce the costs by dealing with the symptoms." Across Canada, boards are promoting the importance of building a stronger safety culture. The WSCC is strongly committed to achieving this goal. If everyone commits to good health and safety practices, the risk of workplace incidents and injuries is eliminated. The result would revolutionize the concept of workers' compensation as we know it today.

With a history that includes characters like German's Iron Chancellor Bismark, and Canada's Honourable Sir William Ralph Meredith, the future of workers' compensation in the North has landed in the hands of northerners. By working together, we will all shape and mould the system well into the future.

*For more information contact WSCC Prevention Services at 1-800-661-0792 in Yellowknife, or 1-877-404-4407 in Iqaluit.* WSCC

# One size does not fit all: Tips for an office that fits you

You are working hard at your desk all day, and by five, you feel the burn; tight neck and back, sore wrists, and maybe even a headache. Don't brush it off as just the cost of working at the office.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2000-2001, 10% of Canadians aged 20 or older, an estimated 2.3 million, reported having a repetitive strain injury, with work-related activities most often the cause.

You can prevent this fate with ergonomics. Ergonomics is all about designing the job, equipment, and workplace to fit the worker. The average worker may spend up to 2,000 hours a year at the office! Think ergonomics and you could avoid future injuries.

## Here are a few quick and easy tips:

1. Talk to your employer. Employers want to provide a safe and healthy work environment, so talk to your employer about your workspace. Common concerns are computer and chair positioning, inadequate lighting and noise levels.
2. Take time to stretch. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety recommends a 5-10 minute break for every hour spent at a workstation. Switch your posture, change tasks or spend some time away from the computer screen.
3. Talk to the experts. The Association of Canadian Ergonomists website posts contact information of certified consultants. Monitor and adjust. As time goes by, your office space may change. Get into the habit of monitoring your workspace and adjust accordingly.

**For more information on ergonomics, contact Prevention Services at 1-800-661-0792 in Yellowknife, or 1-877-404-4407 in Iqaluit.** WSCC

# Young Worker Profile
# Logan Mitev

When you think of a typical part-time job for a high school student, welding probably isn't the first that springs to mind. But 15-year old Logan Mitev isn't a typical high school student.

Logan started welding in 2008, after enrolling in a welding course offered at the Kimberlite Career and Technical Centre (KCTC) in Yellowknife. Not a complete stranger to the profession, Logan grew up in the business, working around the shop of his family's Yellowknife based business. "My dad welded. When he thought I was ready, he gave me the opportunity to put my education and training into practice at the shop."

Part of the training Logan received at school was *Workplace Safety: Safety and the Young Worker**. Created by the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC), the course is mandatory for all Grade 8 students at Logan's school in Yellowknife, and provides participants with the basics of safety.

"I think safety education helps you understand what workplaces are like, and increases your awareness of the importance of safety at work," says Mitev. "You learn about the implications and consequences for your actions at work."

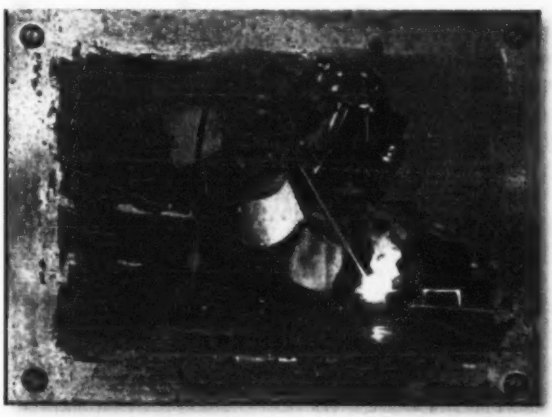
According to Logan, the training at school works in tandem with his work experience. "There's a definite relationship between the safety education we get at school and putting it into action at work. The training at school makes it a lot easier to be aware of the hazards at work so you can avoid injury."

It's the total package of formal training at school, through the *Workplace Safety: Safety and the Young Worker* course, the welding instruction at KCTC, and the mentoring provided by his dad, which provides Logan with a solid foundation in both his favourite trade and his safety.

Despite the emphasis on training both at school and at work, there is room for fun, like the rock crawler bumper that Logan helped build in his welding class in just two days. Once he's old enough to drive, the bumper will go to use.

When asked about the future and his career goals, Logan is as decided on his path as someone in the 10th grade can be. "I'd like to continue in the welding field, working towards my trade certification, or possibly pursue acting. I'm 15 so I still have time to decide."

**Go Safe: Work Smart*, a new safety education course will replace *Workplace Safety: Safety and the Young Worker* in the 2009-2010 school year. WSCC



## QUICK STATS:

| | |
|---|---|
| School: | St. Patrick's High School, Yellowknife. |
| Education: | Currently in Grade 10.<br>Completed Welding 9 (advanced) and currently completing Welding 10 (advanced). |
| Interests: | Acting-Cast in school productions of Wizard of Oz and Guys and Dolls. |
| Current Employer: | Midnight Sun Energy, Yellowknife. |
| Current Job: | Welding and shop support. |
| Welding Skills: | Torch welding, stick welding and MIG welding. |

# A Numbers game:

## Increasing Young Worker Safety

Slashes, gashes, convulsions, contusions, amputations and death; these words sound gory and are. Sadly they are also part of the reality that young workers face in the Northwest Territories. They are words that show up far too often on claims that the WSCC registers each year. To talk numbers you need to remember two key ones: 17% and 455. Young workers, or workers who are under 25, represent 17% of established WSCC claims. On average 455 young workers get hurt at work every year in the NWT and Nunavut. Both numbers are less than ideal and frankly unacceptable.

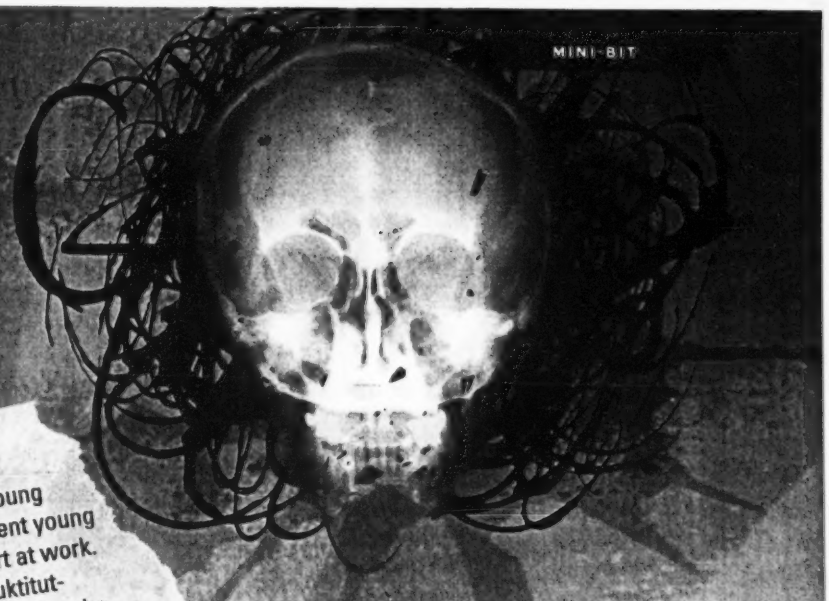
Armed with these numbers and a desire to impact a change, the WSCC launched its Don't Be a Number campaign geared towards young workers in the spring of 2008. Initially the campaign started small with a series of posters. Since that time, the WSCC expanded the campaign to include a Don't Be a Number Tour; a series of television ads featuring three northern young workers; and a new interactive website,

**DontBeaNumber.ca.**

## Here's a brief overview of the campaign elements:

### DontBeaNumberTour

A team of WSCC employees and a young worker injured at work travelled to communities in the NWT and Nunavut. The young worker shared his experience to help educate other young workers on the importance of staying safe at work. In Yellowknife, two young workers featured in the TV ads joined the speaker to share their personal stories.



## Television ads

Four ads feature the stories of three northern young workers. In two of the commercials, two different young workers share their stories of how they got hurt at work. The remaining two commercials feature an Inuktitut-speaking young worker who shares her story of why she is not a number.

## DontBeaNumber.ca

The interactive website highlights injury trends, hazards and tips on how to stay safe at work. It encourages visitors to ask questions and share their stories of workplace injury, or health and safety. The site also features more in-depth clips from the two injured young workers featured in the TV commercials. A contest during the summer encouraged young workers to share their story for a chance to win one of twelve iPod Nanos.

The WSCC received recognition for the work done on the campaign. The Premier of the Northwest Territories awarded the Premier's Award for excellence to the Don't Be a Number Tour team in the spring of 2009. More recently, the TV commercials took top spot at the 2009 American Association of State Compensation Insurance Funds (AASCIF) Awards.

While it is humbling to win these awards, our primary goal for the campaign is to reach young workers with the message of safety. By providing young workers with the tools and knowledge to stay safe at work, we can eliminate injuries. Join with us. Encourage your young workers to take a stand for their safety and Don't Be a Number!

DON'T be a number

# Cold and Flu in the Workplace

A special Feature by the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services

It's a busy week at work and you are stressed out. Your boss is relying on you to get things done. One morning, you wake up with a sore throat and stuffy nose. Should you drag yourself to work? Or should you call in sick, even though your boss really needs your help this week?

Illnesses in the workplace can spread quickly and easily. During cold and flu season, it is important to stay healthy and slow the spread of germs to ensure a healthy and happy work environment. It can be hard to know when to stay home from work. You may sometimes feel obligated to go, even when you feel under the weather.

When deciding whether to go to work or to stay home sick, ask yourself:

1. Am I contagious?
If you are sick with a cold or the flu, you run the risk of infecting your coworkers. Staying home while you are sick will help slow the spread of germs.

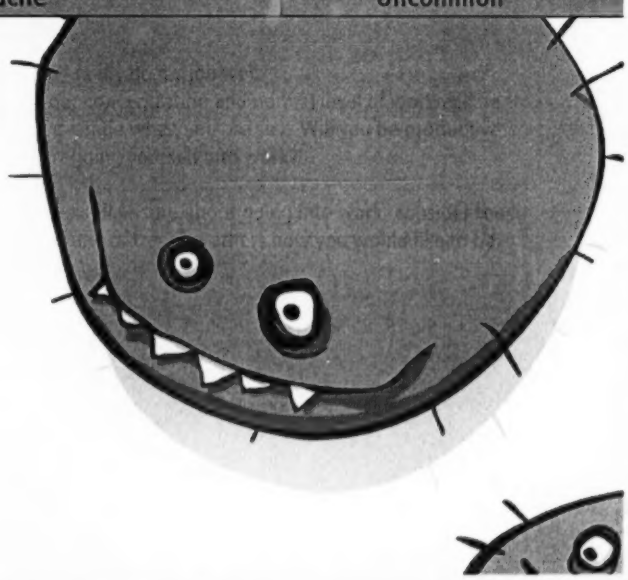
2. How will this impact my overall health?
Will you feel better after resting at home? Pushing yourself to go to work doesn't benefit you in the long run, and just isn't worth it.

3. Can I really do my job well?
Both your concentration and normal level of work will be below average when you are sick. Will you be productive after dragging yourself into work?

If you are still unsure about going into work, consider the 'golden rule' of treating others how you would like to be treated. Your co-workers may not appreciate you coughing and sneezing all over the office!

The cold and flu are both respiratory illnesses, and it can be hard to tell them apart. Though caused by different viruses, they can display similar symptoms. However, there are a

| Symptoms | Cold |
|---|---|
| Fever (38°C) | Rare |
| Aches | Slight |
| Tiredness | Mild |
| Sudden Symptoms | Symptoms appear gradually |
| Coughing, chest discomfort | Sometimes, mild to moderate |
| Sneezing | Common |
| Stuffy nose | Common |
| Sore throat | Common |
| Headache | Uncommon |



few key differences to watch out for. This table can help you distinguish between the two.The influenza virus causes the flu, whereas the rhinovirus causes most colds each year in the Northwest Territories. These viruses spread person to person through coughing, sneezing, and touching contaminated surfaces. You can catch a cold or the flu easily, but you can take action to protect yourself all year long!

To help slow the spread of germs in your workplace, always cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. It's best to use a tissue and throw it away, or cough and sneeze into the crook of your elbow. Wash your hands often! If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer. Many employers have hand sanitizer stations in convenient locations around their workplaces. If you pass a station, take a moment to clean your hands.

| Flu |
|---|
| Usually present |
| Usual, often severe |
| Moderate to severe |
| Symptoms appear quickly |
| Usual, can be severe |
| Uncommon |
| Common |
| Uncommon |
| Common, can be severe |

There are many ways to slow the spread of viruses, but most health care professionals agree that the best way to prevent the flu is to get a seasonal flu vaccination every year. Studies show that when healthy working adults get vaccinations, they have less sick time taken off work. Getting vaccinated may also mean fewer trips to the doctor and to the hospital!

While there is no vaccine for colds, practicing good prevention measures like hand washing will help slow the spread of germs, and protect you and your co-workers. Some germs can live for up to two hours or longer on surfaces like door handles, telephones, desks and counters. Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth at work to stay healthy.

Some people are at higher risk than others for catching colds and the flu. Studies have shown that smokers may face a higher risk than non-smokers. Smokers may also experience a more severe illness, and have more dangerous complications from these viruses. How does this happen? Smoking suppresses your immune system, making it harder for your body to fight infection. Do not despair! If you are a smoker, quitting provides immediate health benefits and will reduce your chance of getting sick. So if you are thinking about quitting, use healthy living as a goal to help you along your way!

During cold and flu season, workplaces can get hit hard. This can result in high rates of staff absenteeism, and important jobs left undone. To help essential operations continue, your workplace should develop a plan that identifies trained individuals who can fill these essential roles. Employers should encourage staff to stay home when sick, and sick leave policies should accommodate those who need to stay home. Setting clear guidelines will help your workplace deal with sick employees and provide important guidance for all workers.

It is everyone's responsibility to keep each other healthy during cold and flu season. For more information about staying healthy, and how to slow the spread, please visit the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services website at **http://www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca/.**

# Workplace Safety: everyone's responsibility

You've wiggled your way past that pile of boxes twenty-five times a day or more to get to the printer. You've smacked your shin against a box's sharp edge more than once and you're not the only one who's accidentally kicked the bottom box (packing shells are starting to push out a hole and make a mess on the floor). It is only a matter of time before the pile comes crashing down...

You know it's not safe but you didn't put the boxes there so it's not your problem, right? Wrong. Ignoring health and safety hazards won't make them go away. Waiting for someone else to deal with it also isn't the right approach.

Workplace health and safety is everyone's responsibility. We are all accountable for each others' health and safety as part of the Internal Responsibility System (IRS).

*The two major elements driving the IRS are:*

1. the workplace health and safety duties found in legislation and regulations; and
2. the three worker rights (right to know, right to participate, and right to refuse unsafe work).

The governing principle of the IRS, [illegible]t workplace health and safety is everyone's responsibili[illegible] is further broken into the following parts:

1. identifying and resolving workplace hazards is done internally within the workplace;
2. workers and employers are not in direct conflict when addressing workplace health and safety concerns;
3. everyone is responsible for workplace incident, injury, and illness prevention;
4. everyone is personally responsible to identify, eliminate, and control workplace hazards;
5. everyone is responsible to make sure workplace health and safety practices are followed;
6. resolving workplace health and safety problems is done internally through the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee and not just under the direction of a WSCC Safety Officer or Inspector of Mines; and
7. a WSCC Safety Officer or Inspector of Mines only steps in to resolve workplace health and safety problems when the IRS is not working.

If a workplace's IRS functions well, it establishes due diligence. Due diligence is the process of doing all you possibly can, and to the best of your abilities, to ensure a healthy and safe workplace.

What does this all mean to you? Tell your supervisor about the pile of boxes. They're a workplace health and safety hazard that needs to be addressed. It's your responsibility.

*For more information contact WSCC Prevention Services at 1-800-661-0792 in Yellowknife, or 1-877-404-4407 in Iqaluit.*

WSCC

Internal Responsibility System (IRS)
Right to know about hazards
Right to Refuse Unsafe Work
Right to Participate in Workplace Health & Safety
Internal Response System
Workers
Supervisors
Managers
General Duties for All
Owners
Directors
Officers
Others
Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee
WSCC
For more information contact WSCC Prevention Services at 1-800-661-0792 in Yellowknife, or 1-877-404-4407 in Iqaluit.

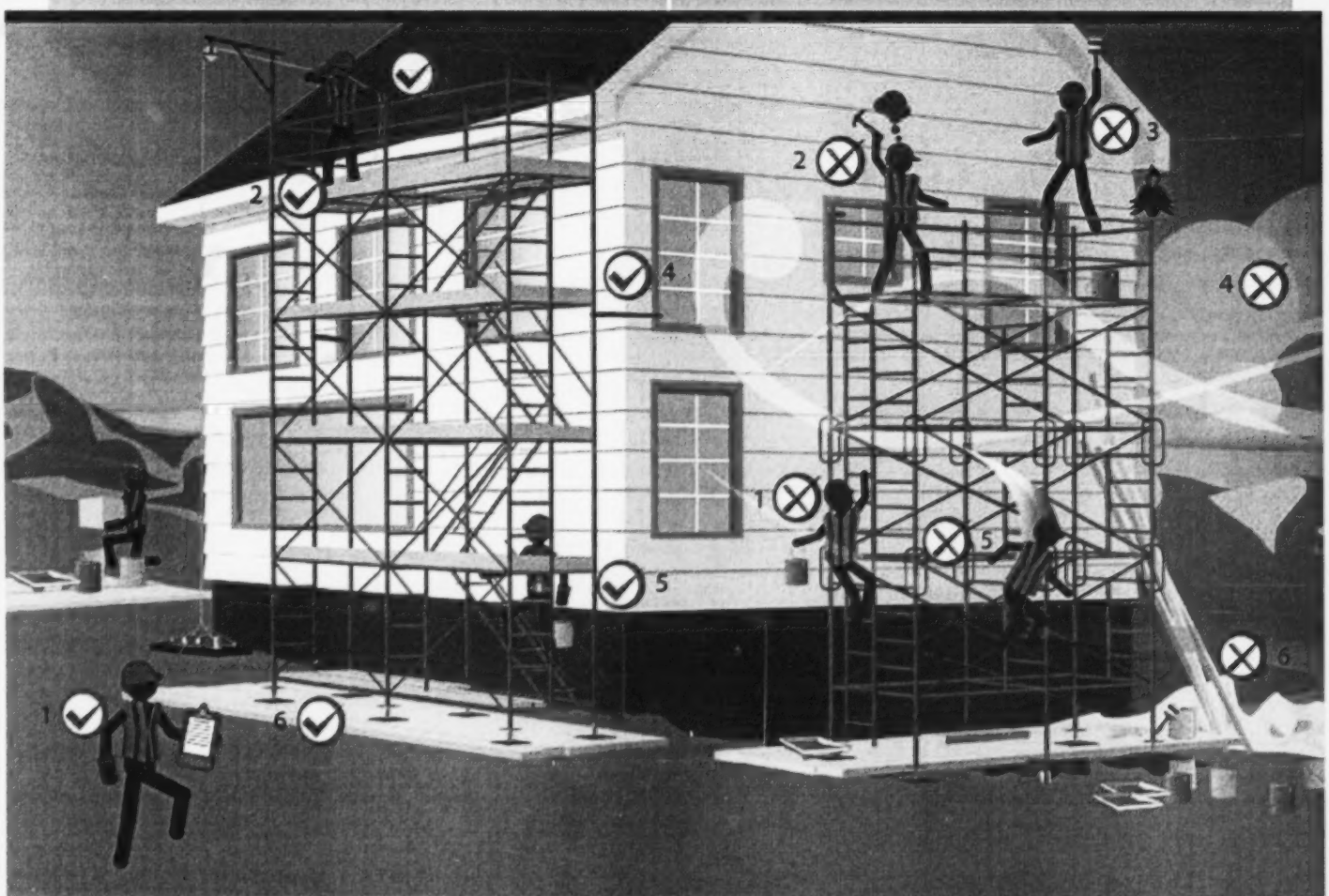
# SCAFFOLDING

## DO'S

1. Employer checks that scaffolds are in safe condition prior to use.
2. Planks, decks, and guardrails are installed and secure.
3. Use a hoist or rope to move materials to upper levels.
4. Install cross bracing at all levels and make sure locking devices and ties are secure.
5. There is safe entrance to working levels.
6. Base is sound, level, and adjusted.

## DON'TS

1. Do not carry materials when climbing scaffolding.
2. Do not force braces to fit.
3. Do not climb or stand on cross braces or guardrails.
4. Do not work on scaffolding during storms or high winds.
5. Do not jump from planks or platforms.
6. Do not rest materials or equipment on guardrails.



WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission | ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐊᒥᐱᖃᑎᒌᓂᖅ ᐊᑐᐊᓂᖅ ᐃᓄᐃᑦ ᑲᑎᕪᓂᖅ

**GO SAFE. FOLLOW SAFE JOB PRACTICES.**

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